

A TRIBUTE TO MY BELOVED SISTER KATHLEN MARJORIE NORMDO RICTOR

January 15-1930 – December 9 – 2017

Chefusian 1935 - 1945

Kathleen passed away peacefully on

December 9, 2017 in
Milwaukie, Oregon.

Kathleen was the best sister any girl could have. She was always loving, kind, encouraging, giving, going the extra mile, forgiving and understanding. We were sisters twice: First, through our births into our earthly family and secondly, through our births into God's Family.

Kathleen lived her life in three countries; China, Norway and America and had spoken all three languages.

She was born on January 15, 1930 in Shanyang, Shensi (Shaanxi) province, China. Our father, Jacob Nordmo, was out taking care of the goats when he was called inside for a very special job. Mother, Esther Oberg Nordmo, who as a midwife, had delivered many babies in Nebraska, U.S.A. and in China, gave him step by step directions for his first delivery of their fourth child, a plump little baby girl, who joined her brother Stanley, three years older than she.

Two older siblings had already died. Erling, born March 9, 1922 at Shanyang, Shensi, died at



age one on March 24th, 1923 from infectious cerebral spinal meningitis in Hankow while on their way to coast for furlough in Norway and America. Evelyn was born during furlough in America, on June 21st, 1924 in Farnam, Nebraska and died on May 24, 1927, at age three from malaria, black water fever, hardening of the spleen, in a Chinese inn near Pingyang in Shanxi province. She was hastily buried in a small cemetery where 11 martyred bodies from the Boxer Rebellion lay buried, while the family was fleeing from their home in Shanyang, Shaanxi from the Communists, who were on a killing rampage. They joined hundreds of missionaries who were fleeing to Chefoo where Stanley was born on November 28,



1927.

Kathleen loved her little mud home in Shanyang, Shensi, (Shaanxi) China. When we four Nordmos visited the old home places in 1997—the first time for Kathleen to visit her home since September, 1932—an old Chinese fellow said he remembered Kathleen always wanting to come home to her goats and to eat her cornmeal.

In September, 1932 when Kathleen was 2 years and 8 months and older brother Stanley, two months lacking 4 years old, the two left their Shanyang home, never to come back to live in their home again, to go on the family furlough. **They came to Nebraska, Kathleen's second country, to visit their Mother's family and birth country and where Sister Audrey was born in Aunt Ruth Oberg Johnson's home on August 21, 1933.**

The Nordmo family left the States when Audrey was six weeks old, to sail to Norway, their **father's homeland and the home of their mission board—Det Norske Misjonsforbund.** Norway was **Kathleen's national country and her third country** to live in during her pre-school years.

The Nordmo furlough was extended as Communism was growing rapidly in China. John and Betty Stamm had been martyred on **December 8th, 1934. However, God's call was strong** and in February, 1935 the Nordmo family sailed back to China. On their arrival in Shanghai they received a letter from the Chefoo School saying that Stanley had been accepted as a student and was to start school on May 3rd, 1935.

While waiting out the serious conditions in Shangshien (now Shangzhou in Shaanxi province) before they could return to their home, Dad Nordmo was asked by C.I.M. to hold meetings in Chefoo, in the old vacant Preparatory School, which also became their temporary home. The same glorious spiritual revival which was taking place in Norway came to Chefoo where many foreign missionaries and local Chinese were gloriously saved and changed.

The Chefoo school decided Kathleen should start school too as she was already five years old. After her parents and little sister had left to their now re-opened mission station, she ended up in

the mission hospital in Chefoo due to congenital heart problems for close to two years, without her parents by her side But God was with her.

When Kathleen was still in Norway, a young engaged woman had a dream one night where the Lord told her to give the Nordmos her beloved big porcelain doll with eyes that opened and closed which she had received from her Uncle in America 24 years before. She had never heard of the Nordmo family. But in obedience to God she found the Nordmos and with tears in her eyes gave them her precious doll, clothed in the new clothes she had made and lying in the new little doll bed her fiancé had made along with a meaningful poem she had written. God knew that the young bride to be would not live long after her marriage. The doll had been the **answer to Kathleen's prayer to have a doll with eyes that opened and closed** for her fourth birthday. That precious doll kept Kathleen company in her hospital room when at that time patients were bedridden.

Kathleen was not getting better. Dr. T.J. Bach, General Director of the Scandinavian mission—now The Evangelical Alliance Mission, along with **several missionaries, gathered at Kathleen's bed** in Chefoo where they anointed her with oil and prayed for her. She did get some better, but her Patent Ductus Arteriosus remained open.

When she was released from the hospital, at around 6-7 years of age, she discovered her best friend had died. That was when Kathleen repented of her sins and asked the Lord Jesus to save her and come into her heart.

Kathleen and Stanley lived 10 years as Chefoo (Yantai) boarding school students, and Audrey 5, in the three School locations in Shandong province, Chefoo, Temple Hill in Chefoo and Weihsien, (Weifang) without ever going home to Shensi (Shaanxi) for any school holidays. There were only two to three times the family was reunited in Chefoo (Yantai) itself, before the three became prisoners of war at the three different locations.

Kathleen, with her cheerful spirit, survived boarding school, in spite of instances like the following, where one secondary school teacher told her that if she, the geography teacher, would



The last family picture taken on Christmas day, in 1939 — in Tsingtao. ... it was the last "family" photo for the seven years to come ...

look into Kathleen's geography part of the brain it would be found empty. Then Kathleen told about the only prize she ever won which was in music. She played the piano before a group of teachers for which she received a reward. She was thrilled to pieces to have finally won an award. Then her music teacher crushed her by telling her she had not deserved that award. Kathleen told also of loving Girl Scouts, in spite of the fact the leader had told Kathleen and a friend of hers that they would never amount to anything. However, with her sweet spirit she seemed to understand the stress and strain her teachers were under which could cause their negative remarks.

God used those negative situations positively to mature Kathleen into an excellent understanding teacher for which she gave God credit. He gave her the ideas which made her teaching career creative and challenging as she strongly believed every child could learn, and learn they did. Most importantly, she was well known by her students' parents for her Christ like love, kindness and empathy for their children—her students.

When the Japanese claimed ownership of the Chefoo schools and were busy remodeling the compound for their Navy-Army base while the students still resided there, Kathleen told the story of how she and her friends, who called themselves —The QuakersII, prayed that a certain wall the Japanese was building between the Girl's School and the Sanatorium would fall down. Guess what? It always did. The wall was never

finished during the 11 months the praying girls were house prisoners.

November 5, 1942 the Chefusians were marched to their new homes. Kathleen was among the 99 prisoners crowded into the split Irvin house. In total 358 prisoners were settled into 6 family homes—including the split one.

Kathleen had been praying for Stanley's salvation and he accepted Christ as his Saviour in his separate compound on Temple Hill. Audrey was saved later at Weihsien.

September, 7, 1943, after almost 11 months at Temple Hill, all P.O.W.s were moved to the Weihsien Civil Assembly Center, Weihsien, Shandong. Kathleen lived in the hospital above the sick rooms. Once, as a patient in the ward, a Catholic nun scolded Kathleen telling her she had no business taking up a bed as she was not ill since she had such rosy cheeks. The lack of sympathy and harsh diagnosis were depressing to sick Kathleen who certainly didn't choose to have ill health then or ever.

After surviving two years of near starvation in filthy conditions the 1500 prisoners, including the three Nordmos, were finally liberated by 6 brave volunteer U.S. soldiers and a young Chinese interpreter on August 17, 1945.

After liberation, the Nordmo three travelled through several different countries by train, ship, plane and then ship on their way home to Norway in January of 1946.

Surprisingly, enroute they had been reunited in November of 1945 with their mother and



*The three Nordmos—
Taken at Shanghai on their way home to Norway—November-1945.*



1946—The Nordmo family reunited in Norway—Oslo.

Left to right Mrs. Nordmo, Stanley-Kathleen-Audrey-Rowland-Rev. Nordmo.

December 1946 or January 1947 — after being apart for 7 years—

Photograph taken in Norway—6 weeks later Stanley left for pre-medical studies in the United States.

younger brother, Rowland, age 9, in Calcutta, India, after having been separated for 5 years.

Mrs. Nordmo had fled their home in Shangshien in June of 1944 with Rowland to go to the temporary Chefoo School in Kiating, China, where she milked the stubborn anti-foreign cow, and then they had to flee China to another temporary Chefoo School location in Kalimpong, Bengal, India. On the first leg of the trip, by plane from Kiating to Yunnani, Yunnan, Rowland almost died from lack of oxygen, no pressurized cabin back then. The only oxygen available had been passed from one child to another until Rowland received it empty. By then his face was turning purple and his eyes were rolling back into his head from lack of oxygen while in the death throes in his Mother's arms, who had already had lost her first two children while travelling.. Just then, the pilot who had been lost for two hours while flying high to avoid mountains and enemy

fire on the blacked out airport started his life-saving descent. Fuel was completely depleted; including the gas added last minute under the wings, as was the oxygen when they landed at **exactly the right time to spare Rowland's life and the lives of all the passengers.** So many miracles happened during those war years.

Christmas, 1946, Dad, Jacob Nordmo, came home to Norway, from his long and spiritually fruitful 11 year term in China, making his family complete for the first time in 7 years. The short family reunion lasted only six weeks.

Brother Stanley left at the end of the 6 weeks' reunion to sail to America to begin his college years, which he finished in three years, and then on to finish his medical school and training to become a pathologist. The Nordmo family remained scattered.

Kathleen took piano lessons at the conservatory in Oslo, Norway and the teacher

told her to continue to pursue the piano as she had a natural gift. Kathleen always loved to play and sing and livened up the home with her music even to singing duets with her younger sister at church (who had been told by a Prep School teacher in Weih sien to quit singing as she was out of tune) however Kathleen was the encourager to help her to sing in tune.

In November, 1948 the rest of the Nordmo family left Norway and sadly left the only real family home they had had since the primitive mud homes of pre-school days in China. No Nordmo family home was established in America so the under-aged Nordmo children lived with relatives and friends before branching out on their own as adults.

What had complicated the immigration status of the three Nordmo children born in China as White Chinese with Norwegian citizenship was that their mother had had to give up her American citizenship when she married her Norwegian husband in China. If the marriage had taken place a year later the children might have been blessed with dual citizenship at birth as Mother could have been a dual citizen of America and Norway.

Audrey became an American citizen at age 15 due to her birth certificate from August 21, 1933 in Nebraska. Mother regained her birth citizenship in 1949. But that was too late to help the three other children gain their American citizenship. Kathleen and Rowland were taken by their mother to Canada to receive their American permanent resident cards which gave them the right to work in America. Another requirement was that they had to keep the government informed of their whereabouts every year until they became legal citizens which happened in the 1960's.

Kathleen received her high school diploma in 1949 at

Maxwell High School, Nebraska. Kathleen earned her Bachelor Degree in Education in 1954 at Northwest Nazarene College in Idaho.

Shortly after becoming a teacher, at age 24, she became very ill and had to have heart surgery to repair her Patent Ductus Arteriosus which had so weakened her heart and body. Finally she had a normal heart beat. However, it **didn't rid her of her terrific headaches. Her sweet** persistent will kept her putting others first after God. (Jesus-Others-You JOY), in spite of her headaches and poor health. Rev. and Mrs. Jacob Nordmo, who were in Indonesia on a life-time visa, did not come home for the surgery.

Kathleen had so desired to have a missionary career but due to her health problems it was not considered wise. Dr. T.J. Bach, who had prayed **for her in China, challenged her in person; —to** be a missionary to the missionaries.

Kathleen became one of the best public school first grade teachers in Portland, Oregon where her principal asked her to go to other schools to survey, inspire, critique and teach teachers.

Another time she was given an assignment at a school, which was renamed Martin Luther King, where an aid was given her to help in teaching 11



Celebrating Mrs. Nordmo's 90th birthday:
*The Nordmo ladies In their Norwegian costumes—
Left to right Dr. Stanley Nordmo Audrey Nordmo Horton-In back Rowland Nordmo and far right
Kathleen Nordmo Rictor—*

very challenging students in an underprivileged area. Every day teachers came in to observe her innovative teaching methods. Kathleen perpetually studied to do her best. The aid, who learned so well under Kathleen, was later promoted to be principal of the school. However, the assignment had so exhausted Kathleen that she took a ten year absence from teaching; later returning to mainstream physically handicapped students in wheelchairs into the regular classes where Kathleen proved an invaluable inspiration to their teachers.

She married Donald Rictor on April 11, 1958 in Portland, Oregon where their three precious children, Donna, Connie and David were reared.

Rev. and Mrs. Nordmo came back to America in 1962 after an eleven year term in Indonesia, having served there without any furloughs or family visits from their children. They had to get acquainted with the mates of their three married children and their 11 grandchildren, two of them belonging to Don and Kathleen, who had already been married 5 years. They were home in time to **be with Kathleen at the time of her son David's** birth, her last child.

Rev. and Mrs. Nordmo continued their mission work to the Chinese in Tahiti and Taiwan and did not retire until 1968 when they set up their own home in Rainier, Oregon.

Kathleen's life was filled with serving our Lord and Saviour. She taught Bible Clubs, Sunday School, visited new neighbors with baked goods and invitation to their church. She loved to walk and everyone knew and loved Kay.

She was a product of the Chefoo schools, scheduled, motivated, and always busy with her creative hands, knitting, crocheting, crafts, baking, cooking, reading, never a dull moment.

Kathleen's love for the ocean had been acquired in Chefoo, China. Consequently, for their retirement years, Don, a navy man, and Kathleen moved in 1993 to be close to the ocean in Ocean Shores, WA. They were faithful members of the Ocean Shores Baptist Church for 24 years.

Two very recent tragedies in 2017 hastened **Kathleen's final departure from this world. Her**

husband of 59 years, who had been her loving caregiver for the past five years, passed away on June 19th and then her house burned down on November 18th. Everything was lost. At that time she suffered a severe heart attack and was not able to walk anymore.

Kathleen passed away peacefully in Milwaukie, Oregon on December 9th, 2017.

KATHLEEN IS AT HOME WITH HER SAVIOUR AND ALL HER LOVED ONES WHO PRECEDED HER. SHE HAS RECEIVED HER REWARDS FROM HER PRECIOUS SAVIOUR FOR HER CONSISTENT FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN WALK AND WITNESS.

She is missed greatly by her family, her **husband's family and her friends.** She was preceded in death by her brother Erling on March 24, 1923, sister Evelyn on May 25, 1924, father on February 14, 1981, Mother on February 5, 1990, brother Stanley on August 1, 2011 and her husband Donald of 59 years on June 19, 2017

She is survived by her three children, Donna (Mark) Davis, Connie (Paul) Haskell, David Rictor, six granddaughters and four great grandsons and one great granddaughter, two Chefusian siblings: Audrey(Mahlon) Nordmo Horton of Oshawa, Ontario, Canada and Rowland(Joyce) **Eldon Nordmo, of Indianapolis, Indiana, Stanley's** widow Naomi Taylor Nordmo, Phoenix, AZ, many nieces and nephews, great nieces and great nephews. She was a beloved daughter, sister, sister-in-law, wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, aunt and great aunt.

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Written by younger sister- Audrey Nordmo Horton - (Chefusian 1940-1945 and Weihsien-1943-1945)

Changes in spelling of names
Shangshien--Shangzhou
Chefoo—Yantai
Weihsien—Weifang
Shensi—Shaanxi
Shangyang
Kiating—Leshan
Swechwan-Sichuan